



## CAS Hanwei—Sharpened Steel for the Ages

by Edward Pollard

**B**y definition, martial artists are people who dedicate themselves to preserving an aspect of human endeavor and culture that's survived for centuries. As they advance in their art, they often reach a stage at which the authenticity of the experience demands that they take up arms, usually in the form of a historically accurate bladed weapon. They know they aren't likely to use it for self-defense, but they treasure it as the death-dealing instrument it is.

When you reach that point and start researching weapons online, you'll run into CAS Hanwei (CASHanwei.com, (800) 635-9366). The company enjoys a reputation for fashioning the best blades at prices that are affordable for martial artists.

It all began when a bladed-weapon manufacturer and distributor known as CAS Iberia, based in Sale Creek, Tennessee, joined forces with Hanwei of China. "Although many major manufacturers are now sourcing knives in China, the image of low quality [for]

low cost persists. We've taken major steps to set our line apart from this image," said CAS Hanwei president Barry Ross.

One of those steps involves steel. "Hanwei, because of the scarcity of clean high-alloy cutlery steels from domestic suppliers, is melting its own steels and producing superior blade materials with excellent edge-holding and toughness characteristics," Ross said.

The Chinese half of CAS Hanwei was founded by Paul Chen. While growing up in Taiwan, he developed a fascination for swords and knives. When he learned that antique and custom-made pieces were typically out of his price range, he started fabricating his own. His creations caught on, and he enjoyed success in Asia and the United States. By 1991 he'd become a full-time manufacturer. He moved his plant to Dalian—China's version of Pittsburgh—and the firm began attracting artisans who were willing to be honed into expert sword and knife

makers.

When Hanwei entered the U.S. market in the mid-1990s, it established a relationship with CAS Iberia, which served as its distributor. The quality and popularity of Hanwei's swords led to rapid growth and eventually a merger. In 2009 the company opened a second factory in Fuxin, China.

Although it uses modern technology to craft blades that meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup>-century martial artists and collectors, CAS Hanwei is also doing its part to preserve history. The company quietly operates a samurai sword-restoration facility, repairing damaged and neglected pieces from ages past. The operation has enabled its technicians to amass an extensive knowledge of construction and metallurgy. The result: Swords of even better quality and historical authenticity are available to consumers in the United States and around the world. ✂